neu aneignen müßten, kennt man in Indien nicht. Daher ist die Lehrer-Schüler-Folge das einzige Medium der Geschichtlichkeit. Präsent bleibt letztlich, was die Gegenwart anspricht, und dies ist nach dem heutigen Stand ein imposantes Repertoire.

In ähnlicher Weise vollzieht sich auch der Umgang mit der Musiktheorie aus älterer Zeit. Praktische Musiker nehmen sie nur bedingt zur Notiz, denn Schreiben ist Angelegenheit der Gelehrten. Diese aber messen die Gegenwart an der Vergangenheit, doch wo Schwierigkeiten im Verständnis entstehen, urteilen sie aus der Kenntnis der Musik ihrer Zeit[12]. So bleiben Vergangenheit und Gegenwart eng verbunden, und da auch in der Praxis das Ältere manchmal höher bewertet wird als Neues, erscheint die indische – besonders die südindische – Musiktradition als ein sehr langsam fließendes Kontinuum, ja als ständige Gegenwart.

So kann man schließen, daß nach indischem Musikverständnis die Tradition einen weit höheren Rang einnimmt als die Geschichtlichkeit. Die Einbeziehung etwa der „alten Tamilmusik" und der Volksmusik würde das Ergebnis nur bekräftigen, ganz abgesehen vom fast unveränderlichen Veda-Gesang. Eine Abwertung der indischen Musik ergibt sich indessen aus der geringen Einschätzung der Geschichtlichkeit nicht – ebensowenig wie eine Aufwertung der Musik Chinas und Thailands infolge ihrer greifbaren geschichtlichen Ordnung.

Joseph H. Kwabena Nketia

On the Historicity of Music in African Cultures

A little over three decades ago, historians interested in Africa asked themselves the fundamental question that musicologists are asking today: "Does Africa have a history? A history that is genuinely African?" For some scholars the immediate answer was in the negative, for it was argued that African societies were static societies without written traditions of their own and could, therefore, not have a history, since true histories can only be based on written records of the past. Moreover concrete evidence of what doubting scholars might regard as an impressive past also seemed to be lacking, considering the fact that the material cultures of Africa did not move in the direction of large historical monuments, the ruins of Zimbabwe notwithstanding.

As it will be recalled, Manfred Bukofzer had expressed similar views in the 1950's about the historicity of music in oral tradition on grounds of methodology. He observed that the music of the non-western world

> "defies the traditional western forms of notation and lacks the kind of historical documents we are accustomed to in our 'normal' research. As a rule, we are unable to discover much about the history of this music and must consider ourselves fortunate if we can gather as much as a comprehensive picture of its present practice. Our methods must be, therefore, descriptive. This means that a historical study of the styles of world music is at present an unattainable goal."[1]

As Bukofzer predicted, the descriptive orientation has dominated ethnomusicology in the last three decades, partly as a reaction to the ethnological and evolutionary methodology of the previous generation of scholars which could no longer be accepted, and partly because of a strong and necessary disciplinary alliance with anthropology which has tended to preclude the historical perspective, except in the limited area of cultural dynamics.

The historical dimension in ethnomusicology was, however, not ignored in the African field, for whenever field work is extensive rather than intensive, one encounters not only materials that demand critical analysis and description of what they are, but also historical explanations or reconstructions of how and why they became a part of the cultural system or assumed their form and function. The early

[12] Vgl. Emmie te Nijenhuis, *Musicological Literature*, Wiesbaden 1977 (*A History of Indian Literature*, ed. by Jan Gonda, Vol. VI, Fasc. 1).

[1] Manfred F. Bukofzer, *Observations on the Study of Non-Western Music*, in: *Les Colloques de Wégimont*, ed. P. Collaer, Brüssel 1956, S. 33–36.

studies of Percival Kirby showed this awareness as he looked at musical interaction among South African peoples while studying their musical instruments.[2] So did those of Klaus Wachsmann who, more than any one in the field, has persistently brought history and cognate disciplines into a new alliance with ethnomusicology.[3]

Developments in the study of general African history have also stimulated the sporadic but continuing search for historical perspectives in African music and to some extent, influenced research objectives and methodology, for there were professional historians who did not accept the negative view that Africa had no history, since they could not imagine a people without a history of some sort. The detailed ethnographies of single societies that were increasingly becoming available[4] as well as awareness of the 'use' of history in African societies (evident for example in historical enactments at festivals and the African predilection for narrations of historical episodes for validating jural and political claims[5]) provided evidence to the contrary. It became clear to them that the initial question "Does Africa have a history?" was badly framed, and that the problem was not that Africa did not have a history but that the prevailing view of history held by scholars was too narrow and western oriented, while the historical methodology to which scholars were accustomed was somewhat narrowly circumscribed. It was argued also that Africa's own history consists of a mass of oral traditions of small and large scale societies that needs to be pieced together along with other sources of evidence into coherent general and specialised histories. In other words, the history of Africa as opposed to lineage and clan histories and the histories of traditional states which exist in oral form has to be written, an observation that applies to the history of African music.

It became clear also that the histories that were needed were not just those that provided accounts that were in essence extensions of European exploration of the rest of the world or of imperial and mercantile history, or histories of music that would serve as an introduction to western music history (such as the first volume of the *Oxford History of Music*). There were of course abundant records in overseas archives for this purpose, such as the records of colonial governments which dealt with the day to day administration of colonies, the records of merchants and trading companies, the reports of missionaries, books written by travellers and other observers,[6] all of which provide on the spot accounts from which suitable historical data, including data on music[7] could be extracted. Although these are part of African history of the last five hundred years, they do not cover the whole of it, just as current studies of "music change" stimulated by theories of acculturation only cover some aspect of the recent history of African music. For the last five hundred years, and also for the earlier and more frustrating period, other historical sources that scholars would use are needed.

The Search for Historical Sources

Scholars in African universities established in the late 1940's and early 50's took up this challenge along with their colleagues overseas. Local historical societies were formed in some African countries in order to involve both professionals and amateurs in the immense search for data. Interest in interdisciplinary approaches to the study of African history developed, while the collection of oral traditions was approached on a more extensive and systematic basis. As it came to be defined, the term oral tradition included not only narratives but also traditions associated with every aspect of culture – with social and political institutions, religion, art and craft, music and dance as well as language and the texts of oral literature. Such traditions were to be recorded and used as documents from which historical evidence could be drawn. Meanwhile it was discovered that manuscripts of local histories compiled by administrative officers and others were available, for some colonial regimes had

[2] Percival R. Kirby, *Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa*, London 1944.

[3] For a bibliography of Klaus P. Wachsmann, see *Essays for a Humanist: An Offering to Klaus Wachsmann*, ed. Ch. Seeger, New York 1977, or *The New Grove's Dictionary of Music*, [6]1980, Band 20, S. 94f.

[4] See the *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, series published by the International African Institute, London.

[5] J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *Sources of Historical Data on the Musical Cultures of Africa. African Music* (Meeting in Yaounde 23–27 February 1970 organized by UNESCO), Paris: La Revue Musicale, S. 43–49.

[6] See Patricia Carson, *Materials for West African History in the Archives of Belgium and Holland*, London 1962; *Materials for West African History in French Archives*, London 1968.

[7] For bibliographical references to music in early publications, see L. J. P. Gaskin, *A Select Bibliography of Music in Africa*, London, International African Institute 1965.

encouraged their officers to do this as part of their effort to get to know the peoples and cultures of their territories. These and the few books and manuscripts written by African authors could be used to verify the facts of oral traditions being collected.

The search for sources encouraged micro studies of historical problems in single societies and regions as well as historical studies of selected topics in well defined areas. These included topics in economic history such as the kola trade, slave trade, salt trade, markets and caravan trade, topics in political history such as old African empires and kingdoms and processes of state formation, and topics in cultural studies such as religion. Outlets for these studies were provided in local and new international journals such as the *Journal of African History* which was established in London in 1960, and also *African Historical Studies* published subsequently by the African Studies Center of Boston University.

For a number of reasons historical research in African music lagged behind in these endeavours, for there were not as many specialists in this field as there were in history. It took a long time for many African universities to embark on serious research into music and related arts, while many of the scholars within and outside Africa who studied African music were more interested in the 'discovery' of the present as well as its dissemination and preservation than in the recovery of its history.

Interdisciplinary conferences on African history or on historical sources also became a feature of this period as scholars tried to refine methodology, evolve criteria for the assessment of the historicity of oral traditions,[8] and develop a new approach to historiography. Because of the complexity of the task and the challenge it posed, many scholars had to open their minds to other disciplines, for as Matthews points out:

"The utilization of new and old techniques in historical research exposes shortcomings on the part of the historian who hasn't acquired some degree of working proficiency in several other disciplines, such as comparative linguistics, ethnography and oral traditions."[9]

This applies to the musicologist interested in music history in Africa.[10]

It was in the light of this that the International African Institute organised its fourth interdisciplinary seminar on *Ethnohistory in Africa* in Dakar in December 1961. The publication of the proceedings entitled *The Historian in Tropical Africa*[11] shows the wide ranging nature of the search that had begun for historical sources and approaches to the question of historicity – in particular examination of the nature, type and authenticity of historical evidence provided by the comparative analysis of ethnographic materials, genealogical studies which can provide a basis for working out chronological sequence of events and probable dates based on the time span between generations, linguistic studies based on the methods of comparative or historical linguistics as well as grotochronology.[12] The value of musicological studies that attest the historicity of songs, song texts, instruments and musical style as data was considered,[13] and most important of all, archaeological studies that unearth and reconstruct material culture (including musical material culture) or studies that validate or suggest patterns of trade and population movement, culture contact as well as studies that speculate on African prehistory and provide a time scale through radio carbon dating or some such technique.

[8] On the historicity of oral tradition, see Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, Chicago 1965. Local publications of collected oral traditions are available in some African Universities, for example at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana there are collections of *Asante Stool Histories* by J. Agyeman Dua, *Oral Traditions of Akan States* (series) by K. Y. Daaku, and *Oral Traditions of Fante States* (series) by J. K. Fynn.

[9] Daniel G. Matthews, *Introduction: Guides to the Restoration of an Identity. Current Themes in African Historical Research*, ed. Daniel G. Matthews, Westport 1970, S. 4.

[10] See J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *Musicology and African Music: a Review of Problems and Areas of Research. Africa in the Wider World: The Inter-relationship of area and comparative studies*, ed. D. Brokensha and M. Crowder, Oxford & New York 1967, S. 12–35.

[11] Eds. Vansina, Mauny & Thomas, London 1964. A similar symposium was held at Northwestern University in November 1962. For the papers, see Gabel & Bennet, eds., *Reconstructing African Culture History*, Boston 1967.

[12] For an earlier example of the application of the methods of historical linguistics to musical materials, see Helen Engel Hause, *Terms for Musical Instruments in the Sudanic Languages: A Lexicographical Enquiry*, Supplement to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, No. 7 (January–March 1948).

[13] See J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *Historical Evidence in Ga Religious Music*, in: *The Historian in Tropical Africa*, eds. Vansina, Mauny & Thomas, London 1964, S. 265–283.

It became evident also that the documentary sources for the study of African history were not only European sources in the archives of Europe and Africa. Contact with Arabic language through trade and Islam had created not only useful accounts of Africa and sporadic references to music in Africa[14] by Arab geographers and traders, but also bequeathed to Africa a tradition of Islamic learning and historiography in various countries that had resulted in a wealth of manuscripts in Arabic writing by African authors – manuscripts kept in mosques or held as heirloom by households and which contained accounts of current events or creative writing. The collection of such manuscripts had begun in a few centres in West Africa – in Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria – and also in East Africa,[15] suggesting that much more attention ought to be paid in future histories to Africa's contact with the Mediterranean and non-western world, with countries of the Red Sea and the Indian ocean. This applies also to music, for as Lois Anderson rightly points out:

"Contacts between Black Africa and the Arabic speaking nations across the Sahara as well as across the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean have a long tradition, and the study of various aspects of these contacts which include the interaction of musical traditions, is urgently needed."[16]

Historical Evidence in Music

The need for interdisciplinary contributions to the historical picture, and more especially to the development of sources on which professional historians can rely was taken up as a challenge by some musicologists. It led them to examine not only the nature and type of historical evidence that musical studies can provide, but also how such evidence can be used, for as Merriam points out, music can be used as a tool for the reconstruction of culture history.[17]

The most obvious source of historical data seemed to be song texts, since the ethnographic literature had long drawn attention to the use of songs as testimony.[18] Professional historians were beginning to look at these as 'documents'. At a symposium on Music and History organised by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland in 1962, Gilbert Rouget challenged the concept of song texts as historical documents in a paper on the court songs of Porto Novo and Abomey which are clearly full of historical allusions. His main conclusion was that while some categories of songs are full of allusions to past events, they do not always give one the full information about those events, for such information is in fact unnecessary for those to whom the songs are immediately addressed – the members of the royal court. It is often sufficient to remind them of history rather than narrate the actual history to them. Court songs have ceremonial and political functions, and their texts could be influenced by these. The historian working with such materials must go beyond the song texts themselves to the oral traditions they encapsulate, always bearing in mind that there are songs in which names and events have no specific historical importance. Because of this, Rouget discussed the criteria of *style* by which the historicity of songs and song texts could be assessed, using the formal distinctions suggested by Roman Jakobson.[19]

The observations of Rouget are indeed valid for the songs of many African societies, for song texts often have both historical and 'literary' intentions. They are full of names of historical personages and make allusions to events, but do not always present history in its elementary form as a coherent narrative.[20]

Song texts can of course be searched for data on music itself, taking particular note of the references they make to music and musical events, and the peculiarities of their structures and lexical materials.

[14] See Henry George Farmer, *Early References to Music in the Western Sudan*, in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1939), S. 569–580.

[15] See *Report on Conference on Arabic Documents*, Institute of African Studies University of Ghana, 1965.

[16] Lois Ann Anderson, *The Interrelation of African and Arabic Musics: Some Preliminary Considerations*, in: *Essays on Music and History in Africa*, ed. K. P. Wachsmann, Evanston 1971.

[17] See Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music*, Kap. 10 & 14, Evanston 1964; *The Use of Music as a Technique of Reconstructing Culture History in Africa*, in: *Reconstructing African Culture History*, eds. C. Gabel & N. R. Bennet, Boston 1967.

[18] Gilbert Rouget, *Court Songs and Traditional History in the Ancient Kingdoms of Porto Novo and Abomey*, in: *Essays on Music and History in Africa*, ed. K. P. Wachsmann, Evanston 1971, S. 27–64.

[19] Roman Jakobson, *Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics*, in: *Style in Language*, ed. T. A. Sebeok, Cambridge, Mass. 1960.

[20] For other examples of such texts, see J. H. Nketia, *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People*, Achimota 1955, reprint by Greenwood Press 1974. Also: Oxford Library of African Literature series.

Sometimes oral traditions concerning a particular repertoire of songs can provide historical insights into the cumulative process by which such repertoires are established. For example, when I was collecting *adowa* songs in Ashanti in 1943, I was told that the repertoire was in two sections. One section contained the songs of kings, while the other section contained "ordinary" or common songs. The songs of kings referred to individual kings of the locality who in their life time recognised the *adowa* group by offering a sacrificial sheep to their master drum which in this case, happened to be the same as the principal talking drum of the society. This was the symbolic way in which patronage was established. Songs were composed for each such patron king during his reign. The repertoire, therefore, has a time depth corresponding to the king list.

For the musicologist it is important to proceed from the song texts and oral traditions to the structure of the music itself, since there may be correlations between different kinds of songs and musical style, or evidence of variations in the style that may correlate with the cumulative process involved in building song repertoires.

The importance of using data from musical analysis as primary evidence led Arthur M. Jones to explore cross cultural comparisons of tuning systems and scales as a basis of historical reconstruction. He applied this approach to a hypothesis he had developed, namely, that the musical influence of South Asia on Melagassy and the East Coast of Africa (which had indeed been suggested earlier by other scholars, notably by Hornbostel and Sachs and reiterated by Kunst) was much more extensive than it was generally supposed, and that it was the result of a massive colonisation. He framed it thus:

"At some time before Europeans arrived, Africa was the scene of colonisation by Indonesians and people of Southeast Asia, who settled on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, in the Niger Basin, in the Congo Basin, and near the East African Coast opposite Madagascar."[21]

Jones used correspondences in the measurements of the tunings of xylophones and metallophones in both areas as the primary evidence of this conclusion, which he further supported with random evidence from material culture and language. A preliminary statement on the research that led to this was made at the symposium on Music and History. He developed it further in a book in which he was able to assemble all the measurements and his theoretical constructs of equitonal scales.[22] The work was subsequently revised (in response to some of the criticism levelled against it) to include more evidence of similarities in musical concepts and instrumentation in the two culture areas. In a supplement article, he drew attention to the distribution map of elephantiasis based on data produced by a doctor who believed it was introduced to Africa from Indonesia and which he contended corroborating his hypothesis, for this distribution seemed to coincide with the distribution of xylophones in Africa – the source of his primary data.[23]

Although the study grapples with the musical problem of cross-cultural correspondences in tuning systems, the admirable and painstaking measurements are not directed towards the historical reconstruction of music itself. Indeed Jones was so keen on making all the tunings look alike in support of his hypothesis that he devised an appropriate methodology which enabled him to get the approximations he needed by choosing theoretical tonal centres that bore no particular relationship to the tonal organisation of the music of each instrument he measured, since a lot of these instruments were museum specimens whose music had not been recorded. Moreover approaching the study from an 'emic' standpoint would have meant extensive field study which he could not undertake. Nevertheless if he had identified a historical problem in music rather than the hypothesis of colonisation, the analytical procedures might have been different. Moreover as John Blacking points out, the use of comparative methods demands particular care when applied to different cultural systems, or to the sounds of music from different cultures. He writes:

"If the sounds of music do reflect in some ways the history of the people who create them, descriptions and analyses of the sounds alone will rarely be sufficient. If musical evidence is to be used in reconstructing African history, musical styles must be carefully described both as patterns of social and cultural action and as patterns of

[21] Arthur M. Jones, *Africa and Indonesia: An Ancient Colonial Era?*, in: *Essays on Music and History in Africa*, ed. K. P. Wachsmann, Evanston 1971, S. 81–92.

[22] A. M. Jones, *Africa and Indonesia: the Evidence of the Xylophone and other Musical and Cultural Factors*, Leiden 1964.

[23] A. M. Jones, *Elephantiasis and Music*, in: *African Music*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1972), S. 46–49.

sound. If analyses of their cultural background and techniques of performance is ignored, or is at best superficial, comparisons of apparently similar styles may be entirely unjustified, and historians could be either misled or deprived of the confirmation they need."[24]

Because of objections such as the foregoing to Jones' methodology for establishing the historicity of scales and tuning systems and the fact that his study ignores the wide range of variations in South East Asia itself, his conclusion of Indonesian *colonisation* of extensive areas of Africa beyond the east coast has not been generally accepted by musicologists in the two areas. Historians have similarly objected to the general conclusion on other grounds.

The Methodology of Music History

The position taken by Blacking is affirmed in all his writings in which he deals with synchronic studies of music. He constantly rejects approaches to musical analysis (such as analysis of tonal organisation based on interval counts and percentages of rising and falling intervals) which do not take other cultural processes or parametres into account. For him stylistic analysis must constantly refer back to culture, for music is but a symbolic reflection of social and cultural systems. Hence by itself musical analysis cannot tell us anything definitive about history. The historicity of the result can only be confirmed by relevant ethnographic data. He, therefore, insists on the correlation of musical data with sociological evidence in historical reconstruction. He illustrates this in a paper on *Music and the Historical Process in Vendaland* in which he discusses how the two kinds of data might be correlated in the reconstruction of Venda history and Venda music history.[25]

Although the value of musical analysis and knowledge of ethnography needs to be stressed, particularly in regard to their reciprocal relationships, it must be noted that the primary research goals of the music historian is not the accumulation of data for the description of music or its ethnography but the discovery of historical evidence. It is the search for evidence that may lead him to analyse music, song texts, organology and terms for musical instruments[26] and musical types and observe musical events, or examine ethnographic accounts, archaeological studies and documentary sources. Secondly while evidence from music may be used to corroborate other evidence or to raise historical questions or suggest a hypothesis in general history, music itself needs evidence of its historicity from both within itself and elsewhere. Hence we must continue to ask ourselves the two basic questions that define historical methodology: (a) What is the nature and type of historical evidence needed for the study of the history of African music? (b) Where and how may the historian discover this evidence?

While Blacking approaches the problem of historicity and evidence from the ethnographer's point of view, Wachsmann looks at it from the standpoint of the music historian. He begins his essay on *Musical Instruments in Kiganda Tradition and their Place in the East African Scene* with a discussion of methodology and the nature and source of evidence for music history in Africa. He notes that "the traditional lines of approach adopted by music historians" consist of investigations into "trends and environmental pressures" exerted on music, "biographical evidence" from the lives of musicians (or leading composers), "stylistic evidence" and "terminology". Each of these could be examined on four different levels:

1. Direct observation of music history in the making
2. Informant's personal memory
3. Informant's hearsay and legend
4. Historical evidence in the writings of travellers and others, and datable archaeological evidence.

When all these levels are considered in relation to trends, environmental pressure, biographical and stylistic evidence, it should lead to the formulation of "a working hypothesis and speculation on long term development".

The procedure of investigation could be reversed. Instead of ending with the hypothesis or speculation, one could begin with it and proceed backwards from the examination of documentary and

[24] John Blacking, *Music and the Historical Process in Vendaland*, in: *Essays on Music and History in Africa*, ed. K. P. Wachsmann, Evanston 1971, S. 185ff.

[25] Op. cit.

[26] See Helen Engel Hause, *Terms for Musical Instruments in Sudanic Languages: A Lexicographical Enquiry*, Supplement to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, No. 7 (January–March 1948).

archaeological evidence to stories and legends about music, informant's personal memory, and finally direct observations relating to "the history of music in the making". In other words, one could proceed from the present to the past, or from the past to the present. Wachsmann uses both procedures in the presentation of his historical account of musical instruments in Kiganda tradition and the place of those instruments in the total East African historical scene.[27]

Although Wachsmann focussed his attention on musical instruments and the information he could gather about them from various sources, it is clear from studies of African musical cultures that other aspects of music such as musical types, performance organisation, form, structure and style could be correlated in a similar manner with oral traditions (informant's personal memory, hearsay and legend), linguistic data and evidence from documentary sources, as I have done in my essay on *History and the Organisation of Music in West Africa.*

While giving oral traditions the weight they deserve, one has to bear in mind that what a people say about their music and musical instruments or what they say about their genesis may not always tally with what they actually do in performance, or with the structural evidence in the music itself and details of the organology of the sound sources they use. It is because of this that historical studies must consider data from stylistic analysis (in spite of the problems of correlation and function raised by Blacking), for structural inconsistencies or differentiations that are the outcome of historical processes which may become clear to the musicologist through analysis may not always be apparent to the carriers of the tradition themselves.

Similarly borrowed instruments, musical types and dances whose origins are forgotten or deliberately obscured because they need to be kept secret may be told in myths and legends. Musicological analysis may now and then have to be supplemented by other approaches, such as those of structuralism.[28]

As in the study of general history, one can fall on documentary references to African music as well as drawings and photographs in old manuscripts and publications as Wachsmann does, a practice now entrenched in African musical studies. It is because a history of African music based on European sources could have the same shortcomings as early African histories that relied exclusively on European documents that Wachsmann draws on local authors and oral traditions. My own inclination has been to use documentary sources for factual evidence of continuity or change they provide when one works backwards from the 'ethnographic present' to the past.

In studying the music history of a geographical area inhabited by several societies with different musical styles, one may consider not only historical processes within single societies, but also those that establish musical linkages between a number of them. Hence in addition to the information obtained through the levels suggested by Wachsmann, one may also apply limited distributional criteria to musical materials found in societies that have been in contact or are contiguous enough to permit of the assumption of contact.

Using evidence from a wide variety of sources, therefore, I attempted in my essay on *History and the Organisation of Music in West Africa* to identify the processes that give music in West Africa its historicity, concentrating on the historical factors that affect the organisation of music in Ghana and neighbouring territories in the pre-colonial era, in particular the effect of political and social institutions on music, including the results of interaction between neighbouring societies, the effect of trade and adopted religions – indigenous gods, Islam and Christianity.[29]

As other scholars have shown, the range of historical studies can be extended to the examination of evidence from material culture, in particular from iconography, evidence from dance and related arts, stylistic evidence of the historical unity of culture clusters (such as the Nguni cluster) and Africa's interaction with other musical cultures, in particular with Arabic and western music.[30]

[27] Klaus P. Wachsmann, *Musical Instruments in Kiganda Tradition and Their Place in the East African Scene*, in: *Essays on Music and History in Africa*, ed. K. P. Wachsmann, Evanston 1971, S. 93–134.

[28] See e.g. Roy G. Willis, *On Historical Reconstruction from Oral-Traditional Sources: A structuralist Approach.* The Twelfth Melville J. Herskovits Memorial Lecture, Program of African Studies Northwestern University, February 1976.

[29] J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *History and the Organisation of Music in West Africa*, in: *Essays on Music and History in Africa*, ed. K. P. Wachsmann, Evanston 1971, S. 3–26.

[30] See other contributions in *Essays on Music and History in Africa*, such as *Musical Instruments on Benin Plaques* and *Stylistic Evidence in Nguni Song.*

It will be evident from the foregoing that although the historical methods of comparative musicology have naturally not been generally applied because of the assumptions behind them, the positive aspects of those methods have not been abandoned but used as a springboard in our search for historicity in African music. Thus although the stratification principles of Sachs reviewed and applied by Hornbostel to Africa in his epoch making essay on *The Ethnology of African Sound Instruments*[31] has not yet found serious application in later studies, the need for an over-view and the sense of regional history he generated by taking note of distribution has not been ignored, for the study of the typological distribution of sound sources and musical usages is a prerequisite for historical studies in Africa.[32] Similarly the historical implications (as opposed to the straightforward taxonomic use) of the Sachs-Hornbostel classification system seem to have been kept in mind by scholars who investigate the historical aspects of sound sources.

We realise, however, that in certain respects our methodology must be different, since we have greater access to recordings and sources of historical data – including oral traditions and detailed information on African history and ethnography coming to us from historians, archaeologists and anthropologists materials not available to the pioneers of comparative musicology. As Alan Lomax has observed, Africa is "the best recorded of continents".[33] What Africa lacked in the past in terms of scores and documents is now available in the form of recordings[34] which may be examined and studied for historical evidence through structural and stylistic analysis. Detailed comparative studies of style or elements of style in the music of different ethnic groups who form clusters as well as those outside such clusters can now be done from recordings and field observations of performances in order to establish similarities and differences that may be accounted for in historical terms.

The Historiography of African Music

The question that may legitimately be asked in the light of the foregoing is "What sort of music history may we expect from scholars working in African area studies in musicology?"

Since African music is such an integral part of social and cultural life as well as a functional element of traditional institutions, its history is bound to have both a stylistic and social dimension. The factors that affect change, normative stability, differentiation, and the mechanisms for the control and diffusion of innovation in music[35] have both a stylistic and sociological base, for the historical processes that affect music are often inseparable from those that affect the institutions to which music is linked.

As far as the stylistic dimension of history is concerned, it should be borne in mind in the first place that the music performed in any African society is cumulative wherever tradition allows for creative innovation, for it is music passed on from generation to generation by oral tradition or learned through participation. As an Akan proverb puts it, one does not have to make a special effort to learn the tune of a song that is current. (*Ɛdwom nkoe a, yɛnsua ne nne*: when a song has not gone, we do not learn its voice.) What is performed may include musical types, individual pieces that belong to the past as well as those of the present. Indeed the music performed in any given situation may be

(a) music created on the spur of the moment or on some prior occasion by a living or known person,
(b) music created in the past but within living memory, and
(c) music created in the distant past or associated with historic events and personages.

On the same basis music in oral tradition develops characteristics and resources that are cumulative creations of different generations, such as formal creative models, melodic formulae, melodic patterns and progressions, cadential patterns, density structures, linear and multilinear rhythm patterns and different textures all of which are utilised in different pieces or sets of pieces that form distinct

[31] Erich M. von Hornbostel, *The Ethnology of African Sound Instruments*, in: *Africa* 6 (1933), S. 129–154, 277–311.

[32] See e.g. Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, *Distribution of One String Fiddle in West Africa*, Program in Ethnomusicology, Department of Music UCLA 1980; Gerhard Kubik, *Mehrstimmigkeit und Tonsysteme in Zentral- und Ostafrika*, Wien, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 1968; A. M. Jones, *Studies in African Music*, Oxford University 1959, S. 214–229.

[33] Alan Lomax, *Folk Song Style and Culture*, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington D. C. 1971, Publication no. 88, S.xvi.

[34] See e. g. Alan P. Merriam, *African Music on L. P.: An Annotated Discography*, Evanston 1970.

[35] See J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *Tradition and Innovation in African Music*, in: *Jamaica Journal* Vol. 11, Nos 3 & 4 (March 1978), S. 2–9.

categories. Culture contact across ethnic boundaries which allows for the borrowing of ideas, sound sources, musical types, modes of presentation, dance forms etc. may hasten the process of change for brief moments and enlarge the provenance of particular usages. The significant outcome of this process is the tendency towards incorporation of the new into the old rather than the total abandonment of the old for the new, for the old continues to have relevance in the present, since each generation identifies itself with the music of the previous generation. There is usually a central core of musical types, and for each musical type a central core of items as well as materials on the periphery, some of which may be discarded or replaced by succeeding generations as a result of changes in taste, roles and functions or leadership. Music in oral tradition, however, changes slowly. Institutional musical types – music of the court, music for ceremonies, life cycle rites etc. – persist much longer over time than music created for entertainment which may be supported by just one or two generations or sometimes only for a few years.

The task of the music historian is not to unravel every thread in this process (for this would be like trying to unravel a spider's web), but to identify, where possible, stylistic layers or phases in musical practice that correlate with major events or epochs in a people's history. As Nissio Fiagbedzi shows in his study of Anlo Ewe music,[36] it is possible to distinguish between at least three broad stylistic periods in Anlo music, basing the time scale on Anlo oral traditions:

1. The music of *Blema / Ancient period* up to 1650 which may be subdivided into Pre-Exodous and Exodous periods, each with a set of musical types.
2. The music of the Middle Period *Amegaxoxoxowovu /Older Dances*, which may be subdivided into Early Anlo (1650–1886) and Colonial Era (1886–1957).
3. The music of the contemporary period *Dekadzewovu / Dances of the Youth* dating from 1957, the independence era.

Thus music history in Africa must begin with a sensitive study of the *historic* present, since the present, to a large extent, encapsulates the past which continues to have contemporary relevance. The *historic* (which might also be referred to as the ethnographic present) becomes *historical* when stylistic layers or phases become evident from analysis, or when the historical factors that account for aspects of the musical tradition are identified. We can never move from the historic to the historical until we have evidence that enables us to take one or more steps backward into the past.

It must be noted also that although traditional music may change through creative innovations and borrowing through culture contact, in most African traditions, it does so without the intervention of any body of theories which rationalise practice and suggest new directions. On the contrary, serious intervention in musical practice may not come from theoretical considerations per se but from social, political and religious sanctions and aspirations, from customary usages, changes in aesthetic values and a generally unarticulated consensus. Yet the changes that take place within the boundaries of tradition are considered important enough to receive mention in narrations of oral history, for music is a social fact (since it always occurs as an event in social life) as well as a historical fact which may be referred to like any other event. Accounts of dynasties may include musical types that were created, changed or introduced from elsewhere in the reign of particular kings, as Clement da Cruz demonstrates in his study of Dahomean musical instruments and traditions.[37]

Ashanti oral traditions recorded by Rattray in the 1920s are similarly full of references to music and musical instruments.[38] When giving an account of a battle or of events in the reign of a particular king, or telling stories of migrations, a narrator may mention musical instruments that were captured or lost, or musicians who were among the captives of war. He may mention musical types, instruments and dances, or some specific innovations in performance as well as others that may have gone out of fashion.

The late King Osei Agyeman Prempeh II of Ashanti was very conscious of this aspect of oral tradition and, therefore, took particular interest in the authenticity of the music played at his court by his musicians. He would react whenever he felt that something was not quite right or when an

[36] Nissio Fiagbedzi, *The Music of the Anlo: Its Historical Background, Cultural Matrix and Style*, Ph. D Dissertation, UCLA 1977.
[37] Clement da Cruz, *Les Instruments de Musique du Dahomey*, in: *Etudes Dahomeennes* XII (1954), S. 15–36.
[38] R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, London 1929.

instrument was missing from an ensemble. He took interest in reviving some of the musical styles of the court that were being forgotten for lack of suitable occasions for performing them. He reconstructed the old grand style of *kete* music he knew in his youth and which combined a drums-ensemble with a set of flutes and a chorus of singers, and in which he himself performed the role of orchestral leader by playing a small decorated rattle from his throne. He did not want to be said of him that it was in his time that certain musical traditions waned or were forgotten for lack of encouragement from him.

It would seem from such testimonies that the best way of approaching the historiography of African music is not to separate the music from its context but combine the stylistic and the social dimensions of music history, using "Music in African History" as the frame of reference. This can certainly be justified on the basis of our present knowledge, for the social basis of the organisation of music, performance practice, the selection and use of instruments, the creation of musical types, the enlargement of resources through borrowing are related to the development of social, political and religious institutions, and more especially to the demographic factors through which the causal connections in African music history are sometimes established.

Thinking of the history of African music as "Music in African History" also enables one to pay greater attention to "emic" considerations and thus minimise the danger of imposing an external scale of values on African music materials that come to our notice, for it is easy for the professional music historian accustomed to other traditions to impose external values on the interpretation of African music history, or to adopt a method of historical reconstruction that places emphasis on an external time scale of no particular relevance to African history.

In Africa where there is so much diversity, it is very tempting to construct linear historical progressions from the simple to the complex in almost every aspect of music. Although such a catalogue would look very neat and perhaps intellectually satisfying in terms of the picture that emerges, it would be too simplistic and mechanistic, and would not by itself tell us much about the historical factors that account for the differences. African historiography must go beyond such a generalised picture in search of historical linkages between musical cultures and the factors that shape the course of their development.

Future Studies

It is likely that the great strides that have been made in general African history would not have been made if scholars within and outside Africa had not come together to define the problems of African history, collaborate in the search for and publication of sources, define methodology and develop a new historiography that takes into account oral forms of knowledge that had historical value. What is needed in the study of Music in African History, therefore, is a similar concerted effort to recover music history through both local and regional studies of historical topics that relate to categories of music in African cultures: court music, ritual music, funeral music, festival music, music of initiation rites, music of recreational bands etc.; or distribution studies and topics related to problems in organology or musical style. There is certainly a great need for thematic studies that cut across ethnic boundaries for ethnomusicology in Africa seems to be too tied to the anthropological model of field study which confines itself to the detail study of the ethnography of single societies. A periodical devoted to *Music in African Cultures* or more specifically *Music in African History* which would be similar in scope and objective to the *Journal of African History* but which carry both synchronic (meaning in the present context the historic present) and diachronic studies might assist this effort in the interim and ensure collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and ideas among all scholars concerned with this history both within and outside Africa.